



International Women's Day 2022, March 8th (#BreakTheBias) – An interview with some of Sword's employees

Every year on 8th March International Women's Day (IWD) is marked across the world as a celebration of the positive value women bring to the world, their families and communities. The campaign theme for International Women's Day 2022 is [#BreakTheBias](#).

Today, Sword speaks to some of the women working in various positions across the company to find out their thoughts in celebration of the [#BreakTheBias](#) campaign.

Why do you think it is important to celebrate International Women's Day?

"International Women's Day means different things to different people. To me, it represents equality, empowerment, respect, hope, collaboration, support and empathy. Whoever you are and whatever you choose to do in life we must always base our decisions and actions on these core pillars.

It's important to celebrate IWD to ensure that these key qualities are represented not only within Women across the world but are the core foundation to how we all live, interact and treat fellow colleagues' friends and family.

In particular, for Women, we must recognise what our previous generations fought so hard to achieve. The Suffragette movement enabled all women to have an identity, to ensure equal treatment, conditions and opportunities. But this can sometimes be lost and therefore having IWD allows us to recognise and celebrate the achievements of everyone! Uplifting people's successes whilst supporting and guiding people through difficult times is a moral obligation and something we should always strive to help everyone with." – Louise Barwell, Sales Lead



What does the International Women's Day slogan, #BreakTheBias mean for you in your work life?



"International Women's Day represents achievement and the day inspires me to be a role model for future female IT professionals working hard to #BreakTheBias.

I am proud to work for an employer that embraces and encourages females working in the IT industry, with many senior management positions being held by women, myself included. This year's International Women's Day also gives me a moment to recognise the challenges of the last 24 months and praise the support Sword has shown me in striking a better work/life balance and coping with the added pressures of being a working mum during this global pandemic. Their support has enabled me to continue meaningful collaboration with my teams, maintain a high standard of service to our customers, and also spend quality time with my five-year-old daughter and family.

#BreakTheBias is a stark reminder that we still live in a world where women suffer inequality, bias, stereotypes and discrimination. Globally, women are still excluded from decision making and positions of power. It is this mentality that must change and highlighting and addressing this issue is a good place to begin." – Gillian Innes, Operations Lead



What is the most important piece of advice you have been given?

"Your mistakes are as important as your successes - I've been working in technology for over 10 years, and in that time the most important lessons I've learnt have been when I've made a mistake or worked on a project that hasn't gone to plan. It can be difficult, especially early on in your career, to feel that you have the room to make any errors, but I've been lucky enough to work with great colleagues and managers who have created an environment where it is encouraged to ask for help and work collaboratively. Through each mistake, I've learnt a better approach for the next time, I'd engage with that type of project or customer and it's made me a much better consultant." – Jennifer Weaver-Smith, Business Consultant



On International Women's Day, what is the most important message you want to send out to young women when thinking about their careers?

"The message I would give to my younger self, and all young women is to aim high. Work out what matters to you and where you want to be, set your goal and focus on getting there. There's no need to compete, you do you. Find people who will support and advocate for you. Adapt and be flexible, but don't allow yourself to be distracted or deviated from what you want to achieve. You will get there!" – Kate Raynor, Consulting Quality Lead

Is there anyone that inspires you in your career?

"Life is a gift to be thankful for so be positive and work hard. My mother has reminded me of this always and is an inspiration to me when things in life have been difficult. Focus on what is important now and have balance in your life and with nature. This is how my mum has lived a happy life." – Lise Parker, Practice Lead



Why do you think diversity in the workplace is so important?



"Never underestimate your capabilities: the things I have found in my life to be the most rewarding are the things that, at first, seemed impossible. Focus on the part of your personality that makes you different rather than what makes you just like everyone else, and run with it!" – Katy James, Squad Lead

If you could have dinner with three inspirational women, dead or alive, who would they be and why?

This was a difficult question to answer as there are so many inspirational women in the world, but after careful consideration, I have managed to narrow it down to my top three.

The first person on my list is Emmeline Pankhurst who was the leader of the suffragette movement that played such an important part in helping British women win the right to vote. This was such a pivotal moment in the history of women in Britain. I feel woman's right to vote is something that can be taken for granted at times (I know I am guilty of it myself), but it is extremely important for



all to have a voice and political input into our society. Emmeline is on my list because I feel that without her and the Suffragettes, women's political voices wouldn't be heard as they are today; she teaches us to never be afraid of making your voice heard.

The second person on my list is JK Rowling who in my opinion is one of the greatest Authors of the century. I have loved her books since I was a child (I was a massive bookworm all through my childhood). JK's Harry Potter manuscript was rejected from major publications 12 times before a small publication finally agreed to publish 1000 copies and now it is one of the most successful series and movie franchises of all time. I would love to have dinner with her because I find her grit and determination incredibly inspirational. She is the perfect example of not letting rejection knock you down, and proof that with hard work, comes success. I would also really love to find out if she has got anything else Harry Potter related in the pipeline!

Malala Yousafzai is third on my list. In 2012, she was shot in the head at 15 years old due to her campaign for the education of girls in Pakistan. After being in a medically induced coma for 10 days, Malala survived the horrific attack. As soon as she recovered, she began to make phone calls and write letters to heads of state around the world, actively campaigning and driving harder than ever for change, despite nearly losing her life because of this. Malala is now the world's youngest Nobel Prize Laureate and second Pakistani to ever receive a Nobel Prize. I had to include her in my list, she is the pinnacle of bravery and also reminds us, women, to stand up for what we believe in. – Chloe Griffiths, Junior Operations and Sales Assistant

